



checklist

- In structuring your own research, it is important to consider carefully the specifics of the research question that you are trying to answer, and the particular population that you wish to explore.
- When reviewing literature, consideration should be given to the particular causal mechanisms that may link social phenomena together, identifying the key concepts and designing a careful set of testable propositions (hypotheses) that your research will focus on.
- Once your hypotheses are established, you then need to use suitable data which contain reliable measures of the key variables that you can use to test your hypotheses.
- Consideration should be given to the quality of the collected data, critically assessing the scope and potential limitations of the data, as well as considering the implications of these limitations for the validity of any conclusions that are drawn.
- It is important to fully report how the data will be used to test the hypotheses, and what statistical results we are likely to see if a certain hypothesis is true.



projects

At the beginning of this chapter, we talked about how ideas about power and democracy could be tested using simple statistics about people's different income levels and whether they vote in general elections or not. The evidence suggested that people from lower incomes do not exercise their political voice as much as richer people. While an interesting and important finding, are there other ways we can think about how different groups of people have more of a say than others?

- Start to think about the structure of society and how people are differentiated. Looking at different income levels was one way of thinking about this, but are there any others? How do income and other measures relate to wider sociological issues of class and stratification? What other concepts beyond income are important to understand how people have different access to resources?
- Having established a broader understanding of these class and stratification issues, what implications will these have for living in a fair democracy? Does it seem to be the case that most people can have an influence on politics and political leaders or are some groups of people denied the opportunity to have their voices heard by those in power?
- If there are reasons to believe that some groups of people do lack a political voice, how could we test this using survey data? We have previously focused on different income levels and voting in general elections – what other ways can we test how differences in people's social backgrounds affect their ability to influence politics? Start to think about wider categories of social class and stratification, as well as wider forms of political participation and how they can be measured in social surveys.
- Start searching for relevant social surveys. The British Election Study and Understanding Society are good places to start. Check the survey documentation to see if you can measure different forms of social class and stratification as well as different forms of political participation. Once you have identified these measures, you can start to think about a quantitative research design that will enable you to test ideas about power and democracy.